

Rosneft Oil Company signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand their cooperation by jointly taking up projects in Russia, India and third countries.

Meeting of anti-terrorism panel

312. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the anti-terrorism panel set up by India and Pakistan held its first meeting in Islamabad;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the counter-terrorism initiatives proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) It was agreed during Foreign Secretary-level talks in November, 2006 that the mandate of the joint anti-terror mechanism would be to consider counter terrorism measures, including through the regular and timely sharing of information. The first meeting of this mechanism is scheduled to take place in Islamabad on 6 March, 2007.

Weaponisation of space

†313. SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether American intelligence agencies have claimed that China has acquired capability to target and destroy any satellite after successful testing through ground to air ballistic missile in January, 2007;
- (b) whether it is likely to trigger a race for weaponisation of space; and
- (c) if so, the steps taken by Government so far to check militarisation of space at international level with outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Chinese Foreign Ministry confirmed on 23 January,

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

2007 that China had destroyed one of its own meteorological satellites in polar orbit with an interceptor launched from Chinese territory.

(b) and (c) Government has noted that, following the test, China has reiterated its commitment to the longstanding international consensus on peaceful uses of outer space. This consensus, however, could be undermined by continuation of such testing or deployment of weapons in outer space. Government will continue to be closely engaged with the multilateral effort towards keeping outer space free of weapons.

Indians in foreign jails

314. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 929 given in Rajya Sabha on the 30th November, 2006 and state the specific efforts that were made particularly to secure release of 1200 Indian prisoners languishing in Saudi Arabia, 350 from Malaysia, 900 from Bangladesh and more than 800 from Singapore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): Over and above the information in respect of Question No. 929 given in House on 30th November, 2006, additional information as requested for now is being collected from the concerned Missions and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Racist attack in Russia

315. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have directed all Ambassadors and High Commissioners to intervene and rectify high-handedness in dealing with Indian citizens in foreign countries;

(b) whether Indian students face racist attacks in Russia;

(c) whether Embassy in Moscow interacts with the Russian Government on each and every violent attack on Indian students; and